

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 29TH OCTOBER, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors D Collins, J Cummins,
P Grahame, J Jarosz, S Lay, V Morgan,
D Nagle, M Rafique, C Towler and
G Wilkinson

35 Late Items

There were no late items.

36 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

37 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor B Atha and Councillor M Iqbal. Notification had been received that Councillor J Jarosz was to substitute for Councillor B Atha and Councillor M Rafique for Councillor M Iqbal.

38 Minutes - 24 September and 10 October 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 24 September 2013 and 10 October 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

39 The Local Growth Fund and Devolution Opportunities for Leeds City Region

The City Region Partnership submitted a report which outlined the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership's response to the government's announcement of the Local Growth Fund, and the potential opportunities this presented for the devolution of funding to the City Region.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Roger Marsh, Chair of the Leeds City Region Partnership
- Rob Norreys, Head of Regional Policy, Policy Performance and Improvement
- Nigel Guy, Head of Research & Intelligence, Leeds City Region Secretariat
- Tom Bridges, Chief Economic Development Officer, City Development.

Members noted that Councillor Rafique had been invited to attend the Board for this item in his role as Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture).

The key areas of discussion were:

- Concern that the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was poorly understood and there had been a lack of engagement with Elected Members. Members were advised that a communication and engagement exercise was underway, including with businesses. Greater resources were now in place for the LEP to make a meaningful difference. Examples were given of work around the skills agenda.
- Issues around governance and transparency of the LEP. Clarification was sought about the recruitment process for the appointment of Chair of Leeds City Region Partnership. Members were advised that the role of Chair was independent. The post was publically advertised and 3 individuals were shortlisted for the role. The Chair, Roger Marsh, was appointed on a two year term, with the option of extending this to a third year.
- Concern about how some of the priority sites identified in the report (see section 6.4 to the report), had been selected, particularly the East Leeds Extension. Members advised that there were other sites in need of investment and it was suggested that a further report be brought forward on Leeds priorities for the Strategic Economic Plan.
- Acknowledgement of the need to improve communication links between Leeds City Region and Leeds City Council.
- Concern about the limited timescale for the establishment of a Strategic Economic Plan (end of March 2014), particularly taking into account the LEP's commitment to improving communication and engagement with organisations.
- Suggestion that the Scrutiny Board be provided with a further more detailed report on the role of the LEP.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board be provided with a further report on the role of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

40 Financial Position Statement 2013/14 - City Development and Environment and Housing Directorates

The Directors of Environment and Housing and City Development submitted a joint report which provided Members with a financial position statement of the City Development and Environment and Housing Directorate's in relation to this Board's responsibilities at period 5 of the financial year 2013/14.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Stephen Boyle, Directorates Capital Finance Manager, Resources
- David McNutt, Senior Financial Manager, Resources
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance (City Development), Resources
- Maggie Gjessing, Housing Investment Manager, City Development.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that there had been a reduction in void levels from 2% to 0.9%, which if sustained would generate £1.1m additional income.
- Confirmation of increased activity in relation to right to buy sales. Members sought clarification about the length of time a tenant was required to live in a property before it could be sold on, and the amount available to the authority for reinvestment in housing. Officers agreed to report back to Members with confirmation.
- Clarification of the position regarding rent arrears.
- Concern that in relation to technical arrears, some tenants had apparently been receiving letters advising them that they were behind with their payments, which may be due to the cycle for processing payments. It was agreed to report this issue back to the Department for action.

RESOVLED – That the contents of the report be noted.

41 Formal Response and Recommendation Tracking - Private Rented Sector Housing

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined the formal response of Executive Board and a progress update following the Scrutiny Board's review of private rented sector housing.

Appended to the report was a copy of the recommendation tracking flowchart and recommendation tracking table.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- John Statham, Head of Housing Partnerships, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Mark Ireland, Service Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 1 (i), (ii) and (iii) – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 2 (ii) – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 3 (i) – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring

- Recommendation 4 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable.
Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 5 – achieved
- Recommendation 6 – achieved
- Recommendation 7 – stop monitoring.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the status of recommendations as set out above.

(Councillor D Nagle left the meeting at 11.50am during the consideration of this item.)

42 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

Appended to the report was the current version of the Board's work programme, together with the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 9 October 2013.

Members agreed to receive a report to a future Board meeting on the role of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

RESOLVED – That the work schedule, as amended, be approved.

(Councillor V Morgan left the meeting at 12 noon during the consideration of this item.)

43 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 26 November 2013 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.05pm.)